

Good morning Representative Tercyak, Senator Holder-Winfield and the other distinguished members of the Labor Committee.

My name is Christine Skelly and I am here today to support Raised Bill 5453. I would like to speak about the impact that treating sleep time as paid time would have on families who have loved ones needing live-in help. My mother's name is Alma Brigham, she is 87 years old and has advanced dementia. She has lost many capabilities over the several years, including the ability to plan her day, make a meal, dial the phone, drive a car, understand that even though it's dark outside at 5 pm, its not time to go to bed or often, even to speak a clear and coherent sentence. Even though she is severely impaired in many ways, she knows her family and remains a loving mother to her children and grandchildren. She has a sense of what is going on and the terrible losses she has suffered. This leads to times of panic when she is alone or if she happens to wake up at night simply because she is just so lost without someone there to guide her. She needs 24 hour care to be safe in her own home. We realized this when about one year ago, she woke up in the morning and felt disoriented and left her apartment in search of help. A neighbor saw her and called the police and at that point we knew, she could no longer be alone even for short periods of time. The most ironic part of her illness is she is in excellent physical health. She does not use a walker or cane and has more physical stamina than many caregivers who are much younger than her. While this creates more of a burden on her family, we are committed to keeping her in a home setting and giving her a sense of independence. She does not need the more hands on clinical care that many in nursing homes require.

My parents were hard working, honest people who knew how to stretch a dollar and were always great role models for their children, but they never had high paying jobs or the chance to create much financial security for themselves. Like many in their generation, their main form of savings was to build equity in their home. My mother became a widow at the age of 64 and continued to work until age 67 in a clerical job. She was able to build a modest IRA balance for herself. She sold her house 3 years ago and we thought that money, along with her retirement savings would be enough to provide for her needs. Until the need for live-in care became clear, she would have had enough to last the rest of her life, due to her frugal ways. Today, her sole source of income is Social Security which provides approximately \$1400 per month while the cost of her apartment, food, utilities and live-in care exceeds \$10,000 per month. She has only enough left to pay for 2-3 months of care. We have applied for help through the CT Home Care Program for Elders, Title 19 and the VA but none of it has been approved yet. We will be absolutely devastated if we are forced to do an emergency Title 19 placement in a nursing home because funds run out before she is approved for benefits. We feel this would be very detrimental to her physical and emotional wellbeing. If the new sleep time requirements for caregivers had been in place, we would have been in this situation much sooner and without significant increases in available benefits, none of the current programs would be sufficient to cover the costs of the care that she and so many others need to remain in a home setting. I urge you to pass this bill so we can continue to keep our mother in her home. Thank you.